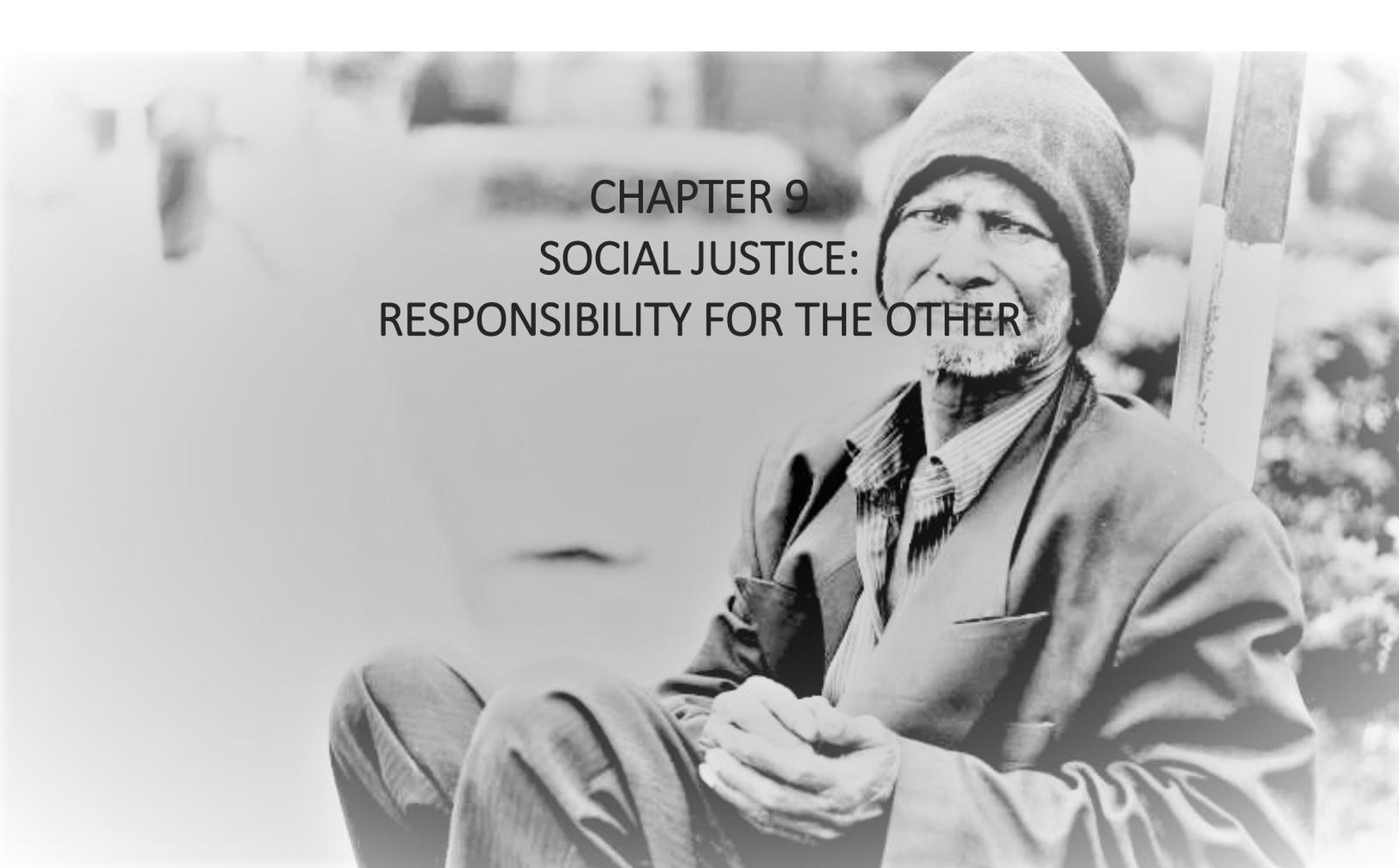


ENTREPRENEURIAL ETHICS

R. D. Walsh, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER 9 SOCIAL JUSTICE: RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE OTHER

Introduction

In September 2016, Ahmad al Faqi al-Mahdi, a member of an al-Qaida-linked West African terrorist organization, was found guilty and sentenced to prison for nine years and fined \$2.7 million by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, for committing a war crime that was also a crime against all of humanity. Al Mahdi, a former teacher, oversaw the 2012 damage and destruction of historic mausoleums and other UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Malian desert city of Timbuktu. Why did he direct his followers to do this? Because these national architectural treasures were somehow an affront to his religious beliefs. But, in the end, Al Mahdi pled guilty and expressed remorse and regret for his irremediable crime. Watch the video below.

The trial and conviction of al-Mahdi was a landmark accomplishment in more ways than one. It reflected the connection between cultural treasures that are the rightful inheritance of all people (humanity) and an international willingness to back up that moral claim with concrete political and legal action. This just action by the court reflects not only an Ethics of Justice but also an Ethics of Care.



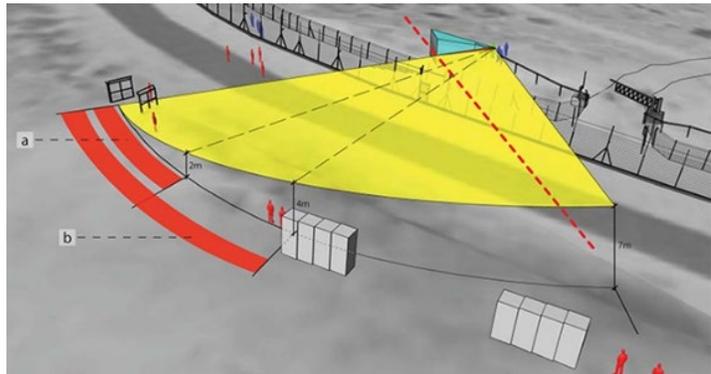
[**VIDEO: Al Madi pleads guilty \(0:54\)**](#)

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As members of the human community, we care about these historical artifacts that were destroyed because they are crucial to our sense of collective and individual human identity. This administration of justice for a human rights crime leveled against the integrity of the social contract was a first for the International Criminal Court, and the first conviction handed down by the court to a Muslim extremist.

There is also another, brighter side to this story. Behind the rightful prosecution of a crime that was directly harmful to humanity, there is a story about what it means to care that is worth noting. This story within a story reflects, in its own way, a positive contribution to the general social welfare of everyone. The prosecution at al-Mahdi's trial had the benefit of a new technology. The dynamic spatial analytic and visualization technology by which the evidence of destruction in Timbuktu was presented to the court utilized a digital platform developed by Situ Research, a New York firm, with a grant from the MacArthur Foundation. This



spatial analytic technology allowed for a graphically vivid and an in-depth simulation of just how extensive the damage had been to the historical sites in Timbuktu, making the true assessment of the crime vividly available to the court, which is part of the global responsibility mission of Situ Research.

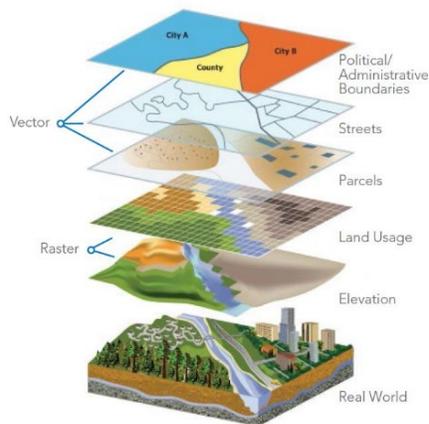


illustration of the inseparable connection between the focus of the last chapter of this text, social justice as fairness, and the focus of the present one, social responsibility for the Other.

A community of care

Issues of justice, as we have seen already, do not exhaust the field of moral concern. Before the need for justice comes upon the scene, people already care for one another and we care about the world in which we live. We care about the social order for the well-being it provides for all of us. This web of caring relations is an important source of your and my personal value orientation in relation to other people, communities, organizations, institutions and the cosmopolitan world at large.

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In addition to the rational application of the principles of justice within the rational economy of an Ethics of Justice, however, the social order is also, and more fundamentally, a community of individual persons who care – all of whom desire to live the best possible life, all of whom have the same human rights as everyone else. Every human being participates in a moral cosmopolitan web of mutuality and responsibility that is more fundamental than any other community to which we belong, the origin of the possibility of all other society. It is our birthright moral community.

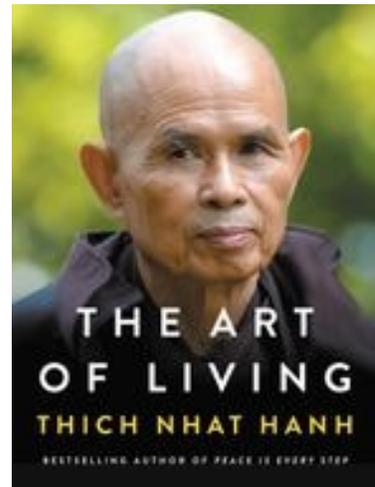
How important is this web of interpersonal relations? Your individual personal identity, always a work in progress, is formed out of a pre-conscious responsiveness to and caring for others before you even know this response-ability exists, as the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas articulates. This is happening all the time for every one of us, right now. This should not be too surprising, since research shows that there are many situational influences on our sense of self that we are not aware of as they are happening. As Sam Sommers put it in *Situations Matter*: “Your emotions, your identity, your sense of how you’re getting along in life – none of this self-knowledge emerges in the privacy of strictly internal processes. All of it is influenced by and even dependent on information gleaned from those around you.”¹ This “gleaning” of moral parameters from others around you is a response born of love before you know it.

The fact of situational influences brings to mind the words of Thich Nhat Hahn, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk who teaches and writes about mindfulness: “We are here to overcome the illusion of our separateness.”

Following the lead of this idea in the present chapter, we will investigate the underpinnings and elasticity of this web of moral responsibility in which we all live and participate consciously and pre-consciously every day in a variety of inter-related practices, and which we can think of as a *community of care*. Whereas the primary orientation of the Ethics of Justice is cognitive, the primary relation within an Ethics of Care is affective. In the present chapter we will investigate this affective, inter-subjective relatedness through the overlapping moral perspectives of Egoism, Altruism, Philanthropy, Cosmopolitanism, and Human Rights theory.

The focus of this chapter

The final chapter of *Entrepreneurial Ethics—Perspectives* highlights the way in which moral values bind all human beings together in a web of intersubjective relations and practices from which we each derive our sense of who we are as a person, our moral identity and sense of self. Participation in this community of care comes with moral obligations and responsibilities.



¹ Sommers, Sam. *Situations Matter*

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If you accept the theory of Human Rights, more or less as it is depicted by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, you will see that this automatically and presumptively puts you, me, and everyone else in a moral community of interpersonal caring that is prior to and the origin of the everyday social order in which we live. It makes more sense to think of the social/political order being configured out of this universal and intersubjective, pre-conscious moral matrix to which we always already belong than it does to think that the social/political order could somehow create, ‘from scratch,’ as it were, our moral orientation; as if we started out morally neutral, a moral *tabula rasa*, and then must be taught or imbued with morality – an untenable notion. Current research with infants suggests otherwise. Infants show signs of moral preference, perhaps ‘learning’ this responsiveness *in utero*. (See Chapter 2)

Morally speaking, we are all in this together, truly, from the start and from before the start. And we are not in it together as a mere collection of separate objects forms a group, but as a *sociology* in which who we are is essentially bound up with a ‘connection’ of responsiveness to others, a moral responsibility *for* others that is more fundamental than even our responsibility for ourselves. This understanding of our basic relationship with others from the perspective of Care is summed up in the idea of altruism, as we will see below.

The cosmopolitan idea of a moral community to which we all belong as a birthright brings up the interesting question of whether our moral obligation is the same toward those who are close to us as it is to those who are far away. I don’t have any difficulty accepting the idea that I belong to a moral community embracing all of humanity that is more fundamental than any other community to which I belong, but I still find myself caught up in a struggle between my head and my heart when I follow out Peter Singer’s argument using the Drowning Child scenario, presented below. I *think* that proximity or distance should not make any difference to my moral obligation, but I *feel* that it does. I am curious as to how you might respond to Singer’s thought experiment.

The Drowning Child scenario exposes the idea that situations, context, and proximity all matter regarding my value orientation and moral responsiveness. Lacking a lot of local, affective context for the fact of a child starving on the other side of the world, I feel differently and respond differently than if the child were near at hand, sitting across from me as I eat my lunch. Why should proximity make a difference in my response? Should I not care as much for a starving child on the other side of the world as for one who is on the other side of my lunch table?

With less emotional context regarding the child on the other side of the world — like being willing to pull the lever to divert the runaway trolley but not being willing to push another human being to his death to accomplish statistically the same end — I feel less moved to help the distant child with whom I have less of an emotional connection. Distance lessens our felt moral response by eliminating some of the non-rational context, but does it lessen our moral obligation? After seeing photos and videos of starving children in third world countries, I was more moved to action by my emotional response to act philanthropically and donate to a charity that would help them than I was just knowing about their plight.

Priority of self or others?

Egoism and altruism

Ethical egoism is the moral doctrine that everyone ought to act to promote his or her own interests exclusively. In contrast to psychological egoism, moral egoism makes a claim about how people *should* behave rather than how they do, in actuality, behave. Perhaps the most notable advocate of egoism is the philosopher [Ayn Rand](#). She argued that the pursuit of your self-interest should always be your primary goal because this is the way you take care of your moral self and cultivate self-esteem. That seems reasonable enough. So, how did egoism get a bad name?



Ayn Rand on the value of selfishness (2:46)

Ethical egoism is often equated with selfishness, the disregard of others' interests in favor of one's own interests. However, ethical egoism cannot be coherently equated with mere selfishness, according to Rand, because it is often in one's self-interest to help others or to refrain from harming them. Besides, focusing on the moral development of your self is also intrinsically beneficial to others, since, if you are striving to "be all that you can be" you will also be most helpful to others. As Shakespeare put it: "This above all to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

Rand argues that it would be absurd to claim that a husband who spends a fortune to cure his wife of an illness does so entirely on her behalf, since his generosity also does something for himself. Likewise, for an ethical egoist the egoistic motivation to engage in altruistic behavior to

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help family members and friends is one's personal connection, their moral closeness to them and the distress that would be caused by their misfortune or suffering. Here is an apparently altruistic motivation born of egoism. This reveals a basic ambiguity in these ideas. Is altruism born of an egoistic motive since I want to feel good about helping others?

The kinds of deeds we perform for our friends and loved ones are not, generally, what we would do for everyone. Rand describes such apparently altruistic or generous actions as a kind of reward which people have to 'earn' by means of their virtues or blood relations. They are not automatically granted to mere acquaintances or strangers. Complete strangers are not 'worthy' of this special form of altruistic treatment. Nevertheless, Rand does advocate showing all people a "generalized respect and good will" which basically amounts to non-intervention and good manners. We should avoid arbitrarily doing harm to others, but our duties to aid them are minimal and increasingly optional with distance.

Although ethical egoism has some appeal (especially in its ability to smoothly reconcile morality and self-interest), the theory has been almost universally rejected as an unacceptable and inadequate moral theory by ethical theorists. Without a fundamental orientation to others, moral egoism falls prey to solipsism and bleak relativism.

One of the most basic criticisms against ethical egoism is that ethical egoists typically misrepresent altruism, thinking that any form of self-sacrifice necessarily reflects negative self-attitudes. If you embrace altruism, egoists claim, you must also embrace low self-esteem and a lack of concern for yourself, a consequent disrespectful attitude toward others who are focused on egoistically caring for themselves, and a nightmare view of an existence where the altruist looks like a big loser, giving away everything he or she has to the poor and needy while ending up poor and needy themselves.

But, in this criticism, ethical egoists do not consider the benefits to self from helping others because they are blind to them. Benefits flow from altruistic acts but the benefit is not the chief reason *for* the act. Egoists recognize altruism only as an impediment to their individual goals. Thus, egoists live in a world of utterly separate individuals, condemned to be free but unable to get together, reflecting Sartre's existential idea that "hell is other people."

This egoist bias seems to be due to the fact that ethical egoists overlook a vast amount of compelling and irrefutable data that human beings are fundamentally connected to and in need of one another, just as we are also in need of the natural world, including animals and wilderness, for the configuration and maintenance of a meaningful self and a meaningful life with others. Altruism isn't an option; it's the natural human way. Thus, here, once again, you can see the importance of how you understand human subjectivity. Is ethical egoism truly as health-oriented as Rand makes it out to be? What do you think?

We saw earlier that egoism is reflected in all of the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs up to and including self-actualization. But, it is altruism that calls us to self-transcendence, the ultimate goal of life in Maslow's hierarchy, putting the good of the other person before my own good; putting the actualization of the other before my own self-actualization, fusing these. Paradoxically, altruistically looking past my own self-actualization to the good of the Other is curiously somehow also *self*-actualizing in turn. Rand has a hard time understanding why anyone would want to engage in such altruism for someone they didn't love, and she doesn't think it is possible to love everyone. What reasonable explanation is there for acting altruistically? Is

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altruism merely egoism turned inside-out? Is acting altruistically possible at all? Is it possible to love everyone?

Why do people act altruistically?



Everyday life is filled with small acts of altruism ... from the guy at the grocery store who kindly holds the door open for you as you rush in from the parking lot, to the woman who gives twenty dollars to a homeless man that nobody will ever know about. News stories often focus on grander cases of altruism, such as the person who dives into an icy river to rescue a drowning stranger or the generous

donor who gives millions of dollars to a charitable cause. While we may be all too familiar with altruism, social psychologists are interested in understanding why it occurs. What inspires and motivates acts of apparent self-less kindness? What motivates people to risk their own lives to save a complete stranger?

Altruism is best understood as one aspect of what social psychologists refer to as **prosocial behavior**. Prosocial behavior refers to any action that benefits other people, no matter what the motive or how the giver benefits from the action himself or herself. Remember, however, that pure altruism would involve true selflessness. Is this possible? While all altruistic acts are prosocial, not all prosocial behaviors are altruistic. For example, we might help others for a variety of reasons such as guilt, obligation, duty, or even for rewards. Psychologists have suggested a number of different explanations for why altruism exists.

- *Biological Reasons:* Kin selection is an evolutionary theory that suggests that altruism towards close relatives occurs in order to ensure the continuation of shared genes. The more closely the individuals are related, the more likely people are to help.
- *Neurological Reasons:* Neurobiologists have found that when engaged in an altruistic act, the pleasure centers of the brain become active.
- *Social Norms Reasons:* The norm of reciprocity, for example, is a social expectation in which we feel pressured to help others if they have already done something for us
- *Cognitive Reasons:* While the definition of altruism involves doing for others without expectation of return, there may still be cognitive

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incentives that are not obvious. For example, you might help others to unconsciously relieve your own distress or because being kind to others upholds your view of yourself as a kind, empathetic person.

The underlying reasons behind altruism as well as the question of whether there is truly such a thing as "pure" altruism are two issues hotly contested by philosophers and social psychologists. Do we ever engage in helpful actions for truly altruistic reasons? Are there always hidden benefits to the self that guide our supposedly altruistic behaviors?

Existential-phenomenological considerations

From a strictly rational point of view, there is some confusion between altruism and egoism, since what looks like altruism from one perspective can also be construed as a kind of egoism from another because we derive pleasure from self-sacrifice and helping others. But from an existential phenomenological perspective I think there is less confusion in actual practice. What cannot be determined reflectively with precise cognitive categories, can nevertheless be known tacitly, intuitively and immediately.



Altruistic actions feel differently to me than what I would call egoistic actions, and I have no problem in actual situations telling the difference subjectively between these two. Selfish actions always *feel* like I am focusing on ‘me, me, me’ while altruistic actions *feel* like I am doing something based on what I think is good for somebody else rather than myself (like helping my buddy move his furniture when I feel like I would rather be river surfing), even if it has the unintended double effect of making me feel good to help my friend as well. It is your motive that counts; your intention.

This is similar to the question about determining your motive or intention that we came across when studying the deontological or duty approach to moral reasoning. It may be rationally difficult to clearly distinguish my motives for a particular act, yet I can feel which is stronger intuitively fairly clearly and almost immediately, as if I had an internal accountant along the lines of moral sentiment theory who just knows intuitively when you haven’t given enough of yourself or haven’t gotten enough for yourself.

The big question is not deciding whether I am acting egoistically or altruistically, but deciding, when it comes right down to it, just how egoistic and/or altruistic I want to be. I am willing to help others, for sure, to volunteer and donate to charitable organizations, whatever; but only up to a point. It is the determination of that all-important but cognitively elusive “point” at any given time in my everyday life that may fluctuate non-rationally on an *egoism/altruism moral continuum scale*. Sometimes I am more one way rather than the other. The egoism/altruism continuum is not a black or white phenomenon. It is always a matter of more or less.

One way that helps me to know for sure whether I am acting altruistically is when I perform a helpful action secretly and avoid the “payback” of recognition, since altruism and the expectation of return are mutually exclusive. However, even then I must admit to a secret, egoistic pleasure at my secretly acting in such a ‘purely’ altruistic way whenever I do that. So, it seems the

egoistic/altruistic ambiguity is unavoidable. But the Drowning Child scenario below will help to give you some perspective on just how altruistic or egoistic you are. Check it out.

Philanthropy: knowing when enough is enough

[Peter Singer](#) is a well-known contemporary Utilitarian moral philosopher who is interested in what he calls “[effective altruism](#)” and “[strategic philanthropy](#).” In the brief article below, Singer articulates his basic utilitarian argument for why people who can afford it should donate to charities such as [Oxfam](#) to help save the lives of starving children in far off places. This brings up the question between **strict and moderate cosmopolitanism** discussed in more detail below. If you believe you have a moral obligation to save the life of a child that you see is drowning in a pond on your way to work with little cost to yourself, why do you not have a similar obligation to save the life of a dying child in a distant land? Why is geographical distance or proximity a meaningful ethical consideration when it comes to your moral obligation? [Use the “Philosophy Experiments” hot link on the next page for an interactive version of this thought experiment.]

Peter Singer: The Drowning Child and the Expanding Circle

To challenge my students to think about the ethics of what we owe to people in need, I ask them to imagine that their route to the university takes them past a shallow pond. One morning, I say to them, you notice a small child has fallen into the water and appears to be drowning. To wade in and pull the child out would be easy but it will mean that you get your clothes wet and muddy, and by the time you go home and change you will have missed your first class.



I then ask the students: do you have any obligation to rescue the child? Unanimously, the students say they do. The importance of saving a child so far outweighs the cost of getting one’s clothes muddy and missing a class, that they refuse to consider it any kind of excuse for not saving the child. Does it make a difference, I ask, that there are other people walking past the pond who would equally be able to rescue the child but are not doing so? No, the students reply, the fact that others are not doing what they ought to do is no reason why I should not do what I ought to do.

Once we are all clear about our obligations to rescue the drowning child in front of us, I ask: would it make any difference if the child were far away, in another country perhaps, but similarly in danger of death, and equally within your means to save, at no great cost – and absolutely no danger – to yourself? Virtually all agree that distance and nationality make no moral difference to the situation. I then point out that we are all in that situation of the person passing the shallow pond: we can all save lives of people, both children and adults, who would otherwise die, and we can do so at a very small cost to us: the cost of a new CD, a shirt or a night out at a restaurant or concert, can mean the difference between life and death to more

than one person somewhere in the world – and overseas aid agencies like Oxfam overcome the problem of acting at a distance.



PHILOSOPHY EXPERIMENTS



CLICK ON THE ABOVE LINK TO ACCESS AN INTERACTIVE VERSION OF 'THE DROWNING CHILD'

At this point the students raise various practical difficulties. Can we be sure that our donation will really get to the people who need it? Doesn't most aid get swallowed up in administrative costs, or waste, or downright corruption? Isn't the real problem the growing world population, and is there any point in saving lives until the problem has been solved? These questions can all be answered: but I also point out that even if a substantial proportion of our donations were wasted, the cost to us of making the donation is so small, compared to the benefits that it provides when it, or some of it, does get through to those who need our help, that we would still be saving lives at a small cost to ourselves – even if aid organizations were much less efficient than they actually are.

I am always struck by how few students challenge the underlying ethics of the idea that we ought to save the lives of strangers when we can do so at relatively little cost to ourselves. At the end of the nineteenth century W. H. Lecky wrote of human concern as an expanding circle which begins with the individual, then embraces the family and 'soon the circle... includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity, and finally, its influence is felt in the dealings of humans with the animal world'. On this basis, the overwhelming majority of my students seem to be already in the penultimate stage – at least – of Lecky's expanding circle.

There is, of course, for many students and for various reasons a gap between acknowledging what we ought to do, and doing it; but I shall come back to that issue shortly.

Our century is the first in which it has been possible to speak of global responsibility and a global community. For most of human history we could affect the people in our village, or perhaps in a large city, but even a powerful king could not conquer far beyond the borders of his kingdom.... 'Charity begins at home' made sense, because it was only 'at home' – or at least in your own town – that you could be confident that your charity would make any difference.

Instant communications and jet transport have changed all that. A television audience of two billion people can now watch hungry children beg for food in an area struck by famine, or they can see refugees streaming across the border in search of a safe place away from those they fear will kill them. Most of that huge audience also have the means to help people they are seeing on their

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screens. Each one of us can pull out a credit card and phone in a donation to an aid organization which can, in a few days, fly in people who can begin distributing food and medical supplies. Collectively, it is also within the capacity of the United Nations--with the support of major powers--to put troops on the ground to protect those who are in danger of becoming victims of genocide.

Our capacity to affect what is happening, anywhere in the world, is one way in which we are living in an era of global responsibility. But there is also another way that offers an even more dramatic contrast with the past. The atmosphere and the oceans seemed, until recently, to be elements of nature totally unaffected by the puny activities of human beings. Now we know that our use of chlorofluorocarbons has damaged the ozone shield; our emission of carbon dioxide is changing the climate of the entire planet in unpredictable ways and raising the level of the sea; and fishing fleets are scouring the oceans, depleting fish populations that once seemed limitless to a point from which they may never recover. In these ways the actions of consumers in Los Angeles can cause skin cancer among Australians, inundate the lands of peasants in Bangladesh, and force Thai villagers who could once earn a living by fishing to work in the factories of Bangkok.

In these circumstances the need for a global ethic is inescapable. Is it nevertheless a vain hope? Here are some reasons why it may not be.

We live in a time when many people experience their lives as empty and lacking in fulfilment. The decline of religion and the collapse of communism have left only the ideology of the free market whose only message is: consume, and work hard so you can earn money to consume more. Yet even those who do reasonably well in this race for material goods do not find that they are satisfied with their way of life. We now have good scientific evidence for what philosophers have said throughout the ages: once we have enough to satisfy our basic needs, gaining more wealth does not bring us more happiness.

Consider the life of Ivan Boesky, the billionaire Wall Street dealer who in 1986 pleaded guilty to insider trading. Why did Boesky get involved in criminal activities when he already had more money than he could ever spend? Six years after the insider-trading scandal broke, Boesky's estranged wife Seema spoke about her husband's motives in an interview with Barbara Walters for the American ABC Network's 20/20 program. Walters asked whether Boesky was a man who craved luxury. Seema Boesky thought not, pointing out that he worked around the clock, seven days a week, and never took a day off to enjoy his money. She then recalled that when in 1982 Forbes magazine first listed Boesky among the wealthiest people in the US, he was upset. She assumed he disliked the publicity and made some remark to that effect. Boesky replied: 'That's not what's upsetting me. We're no-one. We're nowhere. We're at the bottom of the list and I promise you I won't shame you like that again. We will not remain at the bottom of that list.'

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We must free ourselves from this absurd conception of success. Not only does it fail to bring happiness even to those who, like Boesky, do extraordinarily well in the competitive struggle; it also sets a social standard that is a recipe for global injustice and environmental disaster. We cannot continue to see our goal as acquiring more and more wealth, or as consuming more and more goodies, and leaving behind us an even larger heap of waste.

We tend to see ethics as opposed to self-interest; we assume that those who make fortunes from insider trading are successfully following self-interest--as long as they don't get caught--and ignoring ethics. We think that it is in our interest to take a more senior better-paid position with another company, even though it means that we are helping to manufacture or promote a product that does no good at all, or is environmentally damaging. On the other hand, those who pass up opportunities to rise in their career because of ethical 'scruples' about the nature of the work, or who give away their wealth to good causes, are thought to be sacrificing their own interest in order to obey the dictates of ethics.

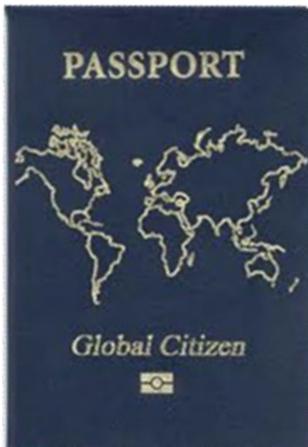
Many will say that it is naive to believe that people could shift from a life based on consumption, or on getting on top of the corporate ladder, to one that is more ethical in its fundamental direction. But such a shift would answer a palpable need. Today the assertion that life is meaningless no longer comes from existentialist philosophers who treat it as a shocking discovery: it comes from bored adolescents for whom it is a truism. Perhaps it is the central place of self-interest, and the way in which we conceive of our own interest, that is to blame here. The pursuit of self-interest, as standardly conceived, is a life without any meaning beyond our own pleasure or individual satisfaction. Such a life is often a self-defeating enterprise. The ancients knew of the 'paradox of hedonism', according to which the more explicitly we pursue our desire for pleasure, the more elusive we will find its satisfaction. There is no reason to believe that human nature has changed so dramatically as to render the ancient wisdom inapplicable.

Here ethics offer a solution. An ethical life is one in which we identify ourselves with other, larger, goals, thereby giving meaning to our lives. The view that there is harmony between ethics and enlightened self-interest is an ancient one, now often scorned. Cynicism is more fashionable than idealism. But such hopes are not groundless, and there are substantial elements of truth in the ancient view that an ethically reflective life is also a good life for the person leading it. Never has it been so urgent that the reasons for accepting this view should be widely understood.

In a society in which the narrow pursuit of material self-interest is the norm, the shift to an ethical stance is more radical than many people realize. In comparison with the needs of people going short of food in Rwanda, the desire to sample the wines of Australia's best vineyards pales into insignificance. An ethical approach to life does not forbid having fun or enjoying food and wine; but it changes our sense of priorities. The effort and expense put into fashion, the endless

search for more and more refined gastronomic pleasures, the added expense that marks out the luxury-car market--all these become disproportionate to people who can shift perspective long enough to put themselves in the position of others affected by their actions. If the circle of ethics really does expand, and a higher ethical consciousness spreads, it will fundamentally change the society in which we live."

Moral Cosmopolitanism



The word 'cosmopolitan' derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitês* ('citizen of the world'). The term has been used to describe a wide variety of important views in moral and socio-political philosophy. The somewhat nebulous core understanding shared by all cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political or national affiliation, are (or can and should be) *citizens in a single interpersonally connected community*. Different versions of cosmopolitanism envision this community in different ways, some focusing on political institutions, others on moral norms or relationships, and still others focusing on shared markets or forms of cultural expression. We will focus on [moral cosmopolitanism](#).

In most versions of cosmopolitanism, the universal community of world citizens functions as a positive ideal. But a few versions exist in which it serves primarily as a reactionary or revolutionary ground for denying the existence of special obligations to local forms of political organizations. If I am a citizen of the world, why should I have to pay local taxes? *Moral cosmopolitanism* generally rejects such a reactionary interpretation in terms of a more blended view of the relation between the individual and the state, with the cosmopolitan emphasis clearly on the side of the individual. Versions of cosmopolitanism also vary depending on the notion of citizenship they employ, including whether they use the notion of 'world citizenship' literally or metaphorically.

The philosophical interest in moral cosmopolitanism lies in its value-oriented challenge to commonly recognized ideological preferences for fellow-citizens, the local state, nationalistic attitudes, parochially shared cultures, kin relations, etc., a challenge to move from more of an egoistic moral value orientation to more of an altruistic moral value orientation, as reflected in Singer's Drowning Child scenario above. *Strict or pure cosmopolitanism* argues that our moral duties are the same regardless of distance, proximity, or kinship. *Moderate cosmopolitanism* argues that proximity matters. We have greater moral responsibility for those closest to us, and less moral duty to those who are distant. Where do you stand on this issue?

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In addition to moral and political forms of cosmopolitanism, there has emerged an economic form of cosmopolitan theory out of liberal, Enlightenment thinking. The free trade advocated by eighteenth-century anti-mercantilists, people like Adam Smith, was developed further into the ideal of a global free market. This cosmopolitan idea involved a world in which tariffs and other restrictions on foreign trade would be abolished, and in which the market, not the government, takes care of the needs of the people. Current nationalistic movements are a reaction to this economic cosmopolitanism.

Against mercantilism and government influence in the market with tariffs and taxes and regulations, cosmopolitan economists argued that it is more advantageous for everyone involved if a nation imports those goods which are more expensive to produce domestically, and that the abolition of protectionism would benefit everyone. If other nation states were to gain from their exports, they would reach a higher standard of living and become even better trading partners, because they could then import more, too.

As national governments are mostly focused on the national economy and defense, from an expanding, neoliberal, cosmopolitan point of view, their future role will be at most auxiliary. The freer the global market becomes, the more the role of the states will become negligible. This is already taking place with hugely rich and powerful multinational corporations like Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, etc. operating in the international market and who are capable of politically, economically, and legally out-manuevering national governments.

The International Criminal Court, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, should be mentioned here again as representative of an innovative form of cosmopolitanism, although it has yet to show that it is able to effectively manage multinational corporations. The Court has, however, made it possible for individuals to bring lawsuits against foreign states. The ICC itself represents an extension of a long trend, in international law, to do away with the principle of the absolute subjection of individuals to the national state and to strengthen the status of individuals overall. Individuals are now the bearers of certain rights under international law, and they can be held responsible for crimes under international law in ways that cut through the shield of state sovereignty, as we saw with the conviction of al-Mahdi for the destruction of World Heritage sights in Timbuktu.

Finally, moral philosophers and moralists in the wake of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism have insisted that we human beings have a duty to aid fellow humans in need, regardless of their citizenship status. There is a history of international relief efforts (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, famine relief organizations like Oxfam, etc.) in the name of the reduction of human suffering and without regard to the nationality of those affected.

In addition, because cosmopolitan duty is not restricted to duties of beneficence but also requires justice and respect, cosmopolitan values and principles have often been invoked as a motivation to oppose slavery and apartheid, and to defend the emancipation of women—values grounded in an Ethics of Care.



Human Rights

Human rights have been defined as basic moral guarantees that people in all countries and cultures have simply because they are persons. Calling these guarantees "rights" suggests that they attach to particular individuals who can invoke them; that they are of high priority; and that compliance with them is mandatory rather than discretionary.

Human rights are frequently held to be universal in the sense that all people have and should enjoy them, and to be independent in the sense that they exist and are available as standards of justification and criticism, whether or not they are recognized and implemented by the legal system or political officials of a country.

One way to look at the moral doctrine of human rights is to view it as aiming at identifying the fundamental prerequisites for each human being to lead a minimally good life, such as rights against torture and rights to health care.

This aspiration has been enshrined in various declarations and legal conventions issued during the past fifty years, initiated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and perpetuated by, most importantly, the European Convention on Human Rights (1954) and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966). Together these three documents form the centerpiece of a moral doctrine that many consider to be capable of providing the contemporary geo-political order with what amounts to an [*international bill of rights*](#).

However, the doctrine of human rights does not aim to be a fully comprehensive moral doctrine. An appeal to human rights does not provide us with a fully comprehensive account of morality per se. Human rights do not, for example, provide us with criteria for answering such questions as whether telling lies is inherently immoral, or what the extent of one's moral obligations to friends and lovers ought to be. What human rights primarily aim to identify is the basis for determining the shape, content, and scope of fundamental, public moral norms and policies that reflect a certain understanding of moral human nature. ***Human rights aim to secure for individuals the necessary conditions for leading a minimally good life within the ideal construct of the best possible life.***

Public authorities, both national and international, are identified as typically best placed to secure these conditions and so, the doctrine of human rights has become, for many, a first port of moral call for determining the basic moral guarantees all of us have a right to expect, both of one another but also, primarily, of those national and international institutions capable of directly affecting our most important interests.

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The doctrine of human rights aspires to provide the contemporary, allegedly post-ideological, geo-political order with a common framework for determining the basic economic, political, and social conditions required for all individuals to have the possibility of living the good life. While the practical efficacy of promoting and protecting human rights is significantly aided by individual nation-states' legally recognizing the doctrine, the ultimate validity of human rights is characteristically thought of as not conditional upon such recognition. The moral justification of human rights is thought to precede considerations of strict national sovereignty.



An underlying aspiration of the doctrine of human rights is to provide a set of legitimate criteria to which all nation-states universally should adhere. Appeals to national sovereignty should not provide a legitimate means for nation-states to permanently opt out of their fundamental human rights-based commitments.

Thus, the doctrine of human rights is ideally placed to provide individuals with a powerful means for morally auditing the legitimacy of those contemporary national and international forms of political and economic authority that confront us and claim jurisdiction over us. This is no small measure of the contemporary moral and political significance of the doctrine of human rights. For many of its most strident supporters, the doctrine of human rights aims to provide a fundamentally legitimate moral basis for regulating the entire contemporary geo-political order.

A Brief Overview of Chapter 9

Reflection on the ideas of egoism, altruism, and prosocial behavior is important because it brings up one of the most fundamental questions we can ask about human beings: How should we understand what it means to be a human being?

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Should human beings be understood to be essentially self-oriented, separate from and in competition with one another, focused primarily on self-interest and achieving a good life for themselves within a framework of justice? Or should human beings be thought of as being essentially concerned with the good of others over my own good, an altruistic orientation of care for others that is prior to self-interest? Is that how we should understand what it means to be a human being? Or, are these two perspectives both a part of what it means to be a human being? If so, in what relation? What do you think? Where do you stand?

This chapter and the previous chapter bring into relief the fundamental importance of the Ethics of Care and the Ethics of Justice. They show that the relation in which we view justice and care is important. It seems that Care is more fundamental than Justice. Justice will never happen if nobody cares.

Regarding the social injustice of wage theft, for example, Marianne Levine in her article [“Behind the minimum wage fight, a sweeping failure to enforce the law”](#) claims that things like making it easier for victims to get pre-judgment liens against offending employers and requiring employers who are repeat offenders to put up “wage bonds,” along with hiring more investigators of wage theft claims, would be helpful to stopping this widespread illegal practice. But she adds, insightfully, none of this will happen if nobody cares:

*Tools like prejudgment liens and wage bonds might help workers recover their wages, but, advocates insist, they won't be effective without a stronger commitment from states. For states to do a better job enforcing wage and overtime laws, **they must first demonstrate that they care enough to devote the manpower necessary** (emphasis added). Until they do that, advocates say, the nation's wage-and-hour laws will be followed only when employers feel like doing so.*

Care and Justice come into play when trying to understand the relation of egoism and altruism. There is both a positive and a negative way of viewing egoism, each with its own set of complications. Negatively, egoism is a selfish focus on me first over everyone else. On the other hand, Ayn Rand makes a good case for viewing egoism as a positive focus on caring for yourself, developing self-esteem and a sense of self-worth in a process of self-actualization.

To give yourself away altruistically without getting anything in return, Rand argues, could leave you morally depleted and in need of support yourself. What good is that, she asks? And even a positive self-focus can deteriorate in practice into narcissistic self-absorption, social insensitivity, and a lack of empathy for others. This is perhaps more likely to happen if the person has the underlying belief that human beings are basically selfish. From such a belief position, being selfish is justified by the belief that others are acting selfishly also. The egoist overlooks the essential value of the Other for my own self-creation, and is thus left stranded in the existential condition.

Moral egoism and altruism should not be thought of as a black and white issue. Distinguishing between the positive and negative versions of egoism in actual, everyday practice can be difficult. Sure, I think I should donate to a worthy cause or act prosocially to some degree, but to what degree? Exactly how much? how often? to whom? at what cost to myself? in what form? These are specific moral determinations that will require some reflection and deliberation in order to arrive at concrete, actionable answers.

Again, following more of a trajectory of Care, Moral Cosmopolitanism argues that all human beings participate in a moral community. This fundamental, pre-conscious participation is

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reflected, for example, in the affirmation of Human Rights as a birthright. Children have a Right to Play, for example. All children. No child anywhere should ever be deprived of this right. That is the power of the moral bond shared by all humans, reflected in Human Rights Theory. But how strong is that bond? Is it stronger for those we love than for strangers? Or should our moral responsiveness be the same for all? How far does our obligation to support the rights of others extend? Are you a strict or moderate cosmopolitan? What about those children in Africa whose childhood is lost mining for gold that gets sent west for high-end jewelry? How important is proximity to Care?

This chapter has looked at how your personal moral value orientation arises out of and is shaped by a non-rational, affective, caring responsiveness to others within the everyday web of situations, practices and relationships that constitute your existential life in the social order. We approached this reflection through the prism of egoism, altruism, prosocial behavior, moral cosmopolitanism and Human Rights theory.



PRACTICE

TERMS TO KNOW

- Ethical egoism
- Altruism
- Philanthropy
- Moral cosmopolitanism
- Political cosmopolitanism
- Strict cosmopolitanism
- Moderate cosmopolitanism
- Human Rights
- Moral human rights
- Political human rights
- Legal human rights
- Philanthropy
- Drowning Child scenario
- Ayn Rand
- prosocial behavior
- Peter Singer
- Expanding circle of care

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What is the significance of the trial and conviction of al-Faqui al-Mahdi for the Timbuktu destruction of World Heritage sites and how does it reflect, from two different perspectives, the Ethics of Justice and the Ethics of Care?

2. The social order can be viewed as a political order, as we saw in the last chapter. What does it mean to view the social order as a community of care

3. How does ethical egoism view the nature and purpose of human beings?

4. Is ethical egoism equivalent to selfishness?

5. How does Rand construe egoism in a positive manner, and altruism in a negative light?

6. In what way do egoists sometimes misrepresent altruism?

7. What reasons does social psychology provide for explaining why people sometimes act altruistically?

8. Whereas it can be difficult to determine egoistic actions from altruistic actions in a clear and objective way, phenomenology offers a different approach which seems to avoid this ambiguity to some extent. How would a phenomenologist approach an understanding of the difference between egoism and altruism?

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9. What is the “negative state relief model” approach to understanding altruistic behavior and how does that differ from the empathy-altruism hypothesis?
10. How would you summarize Peter Singer’s argument in “The Drowning Child” and how compelling do you find this argument to be?
11. How does moral cosmopolitanism differ from political cosmopolitanism?
12. Where do you fall in terms of the cosmopolitan distinction between strict and moderate?
13. Why is the doctrine of human rights not effective as a complete moral theory?
14. On what basis does the doctrine of human rights aspire to offer geo-political moral guidance?
15. How strongly do you subscribe to the doctrine of human rights yourself?

REFLECTION EXERCISES

Morality and the Law

DIRECTIONS: The two articles below, each in its own profoundly unfortunate way, should provide something of value for you if you read it and take a few moments to reflect on your experience. It should give you the chance to experience for a moment where you stand in terms of the relationship between morality and the law in actual everyday practice. What difference does it make to you to view these reports from the perspective of the Ethics of Justice, on the one hand, and the Ethics of Care, on the other? Try actively evaluating the two stories below from each of these perspectives. What kind of a responses do you have? How important do your responses feel to you? How important do you think this issue is in general? What is the difference between your thoughts and feelings on the matter? Want to exercise your perceptual powers? Try sharing these stories and your responses to them with a friend and see if your friend agrees with you. Clarify the difference.

Teens filmed, mocked and laughed while man slowly drowned

July 20, 2017 – Fox News - Florida Today, FL

Authorities in Florida say that a group of teenagers recorded the drowning of a disabled man last week — and did nothing to help as they made fun of his struggles.

Jamel Dunn, 32, of Cocoa, drowned in a retention pond July 9. His body was recovered July 14, two days after his fiancé reported him missing. Late last week, a friend of Dunn's family came across the video on social media and forwarded it to authorities in Brevard County.

In the video, which was published by the Florida Today newspaper Thursday, the teens can be heard laughing at Dunn as he splashes futilely in the water and screams for help.

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"Get out the water, you gonna die," yells one, while another yells, "ain't nobody fixing to help you, you dumb (expletive)." As Dunn disappears under the water, one of the teens says, "Oh, he just died."

Investigators say none of the teens — all between 14 and 16 years old — called 911 to report Dunn's drowning or tried to help the man.

"They just laughed the whole time," Cocoa Police Department spokeswoman Yvonne Martinez told Florida Today. "He was just screaming ... for someone to help him."

Police said the teens were identified and questioned by detectives, but it's unlikely they will face charges, since they were not directly involved in Dunn's death.

The Brevard County State Attorney's Office called the video a "tragedy" and said the teens had "no moral justification" for not attempting to help Dunn.

Mining money goes missing in Congo

July 20, 2017 Johannesburg — The Globe and Mail

In one of Africa's poorest countries, more than \$750-million (U.S.) in mining revenue disappeared before it could reach the national treasury, an investigation has found.

The money from mining companies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was diverted over a three-year period, with much of it siphoned off by politically connected insiders at opaque tax agencies, according to a report by Global Witness, an independent research group.

The findings are significant for Canadian mining companies, which have been major investors in Congo and have given millions of dollars in payments to official agencies and state enterprises in the country.

Under new federal laws, Canadian mining and energy companies must disclose all payments to all levels of governments at home and abroad. Those disclosures, most of them released this year for the first time, show that Canadian companies have paid many millions of dollars to Congolese agencies.

Toronto-based Banro Corp., for example, disclosed on May 30 that it had paid \$10.8-million in taxes, fees and royalties in Congo last year, while Vancouver-based Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. disclosed that it had paid about \$6.3-million in taxes and fees in the country last year. Banro operates gold mines in Congo and Ivanhoe is developing copper and zinc mines.

"Testimony and documentation gathered by Global Witness indicates that at least some of the funds were distributed among corrupt networks linked to President Joseph Kabila's regime," the report says.

In a statement, Pete Jones, senior campaigner at Global Witness, said: "Congo's mining revenues should be helping to lift its people out of poverty, but instead huge sums are being siphoned away from the public purse and into unaccountable agencies headed up by people with ties to political elites. Some of the transactions we've looked at paint a picture of these agencies as a cash machine for Kabila's regime."

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Congo, one of the biggest countries in Africa, is also among the poorest. It is ranked 176 out of 188 countries in the latest United Nations Human Development Report, with 77 per cent of its population surviving on less than \$2 a day. More than 40 per cent of its children have stunted growth because of malnutrition. Roads, hospitals and schools are poorly funded and often in terrible condition.

Yet at the same time, Congo has vast mineral resources, attracting huge investments from foreign companies because of its low production costs and high-quality minerals. It is the biggest copper producer in Africa, and it produces 60 per cent of the world's cobalt. Up to \$10-billion worth of copper and cobalt is extracted and exported from Congo every year, yet only 6 per cent of this revenue is reaching the national budget, the Global Witness report says.

In total, foreign mining companies are paying more than \$1-billion annually in taxes, royalties and other payments in Congo, but a large fraction goes missing, the report says. "Year after year, Congo is losing out on a fortune."

Looking at data from 2013 to 2015, the report estimates that \$753-million in Congo's mining revenue did not reach the national treasury. Instead it was held back by state-owned mining companies and national tax agencies, which did not explain what they did with the money.

In addition, a further \$570-million over three years was paid to small government agencies and a provincial tax agency that failed to account for the funds. This means that 30 to 40 per cent of annual mining payments in Congo are never reaching the national treasury, the report says.

One of the main reasons is an obscure law that allows Congo's national tax agencies to hold back a portion of mining revenues for their own use. "What happens to this money is unclear," Global Witness says in the report.

"The agencies are secretive and often headed by powerful individuals with close professional or personal ties to the Prime Minister's office or to the Presidency. The opacity around the withheld funds makes this system highly susceptible to corruption."

The tax agencies are also permitted to issue penalties to mining companies for tax violations and keep a proportion of the fines, which can be enormous amounts. This encourages "predatory behavior" and corruption at the agencies, the report says.

Another key reason for the disappearing revenue is the state mining company, Gécamines, headed by a close ally of Mr. Kabila. While it provides little to the national treasury, and its employees often go for months without salaries, Gécamines has handed out millions of dollars in cash in suspect transactions to unknown persons, the report says.

In 2014 and 2015, for example, it says the state company earned more than \$514-million in revenue from the mining sector, including payments from foreign mining companies, yet it transferred less than \$37-million to the government.

Foreign mining companies that pay multimillion-dollar amounts in Congo should use their influence to persuade the official agencies and state companies to become more transparent and publish audited annual accounts, the report says.

SCENARIO EXERCISE

What should Tony do?

Tony, a data analyst for a major casino, is working after normal business hours to finish an important project that must be ready the following morning. He realizes that he is missing some key data that had been wrongly sent to his coworker Robert. He could get the data from Robert tomorrow but then he would look bad for mismanaging the data flow and not having the project ready to present.

A few days ago, Tony had inadvertently observed Robert typing in his password for his pc, and so he decides to go ahead and log into Robert's computer and resend the data to himself thinking no one will ever know. Upon doing so, however, Tony sees an open email regarding gambling bets Robert placed over the last several days from work with a local sports book. All employees of the casino are expressly forbidden to engage in gambling activities to avoid any hint of conflict of interest. Robert could be fired for his violation of the casino's gambling policy.

Tony knows he should report Robert to their supervisor but then he would have to admit to violating the company's information technology regulations regarding privacy for logging into Robert's computer without permission, for which Tony could possibly get fired. Even if he warns Robert to stop his betting, he would still have to reveal the illicit source of his information to Robert, which would be embarrassing, and hypocritical Tony feels; and he could not be sure Robert would stop gambling anyway.

What should Tony do?